THE VICTORIAN BING CROSBY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER JAN, 1978

Hello!
And belated good wishes for the Christmas season just past. I hope that Christmas brought you all the happiness that you desired and that 1978 will be a year that you will want to remember.

The enormous sense of loss we all felt at Bing's passing last October is now receeding and although it is hard to imagine that he is no longer with us, the enormous legacy of material which he left behind will ensure that we will be supplied with "new" Crosby material for a long time to come. Already there have been "legitimate" issues of Bing's radio songs (as distinct from the many "pirate" issues of years past) and the U.S. Biograph label shortly plans to issue the actual soundtrack songs from Bing's 1931 Mack Sennett shorts! Don't miss that one. And of coulse, there are the large number of commercial re-issues that have appeared in the closing months of 1977 to say nothing of Bing's last commercial record "Seasons". A comprehensive listing of all these records will appear later in this newsletter.

On the book front too, there have been several excellent publications in recent times in America. These include "The one and only Bing" and "The Films of Bing Crosby". I imagine that both will be issued here in due course, but if they are not, the Society will look at importing copies for members. I also understand that Kathryn is writing a book entitled "My life with Bing" which would be a companion-piece to her book of several years ago "Bing and other things" (which unfortunately was mostly about other things!) A writer who worked on a couple of Bing's 1930's movies, Herb Polesi (? spelling) is working on a book of reminisinces as well, so too is Ken Barnes - Bing's last record producer, and so too is an American radio announcer , John Sallsbury! Quite an impressive list, I'm sure you'll agree. And you can bet that there any number of other people at work as well! How sad that it took Bing's death to stir all this activity up.

Welcome to new members

As you probably know, the Society received quite a lot of publicity after Bing's death. We were even written up in a Brisbane newspaper! The upshot of all the publicity, naturally enough, was a large influx of new members, and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all those who have joined in recent weeks. I hope that you get all that you would like to out of membership in our society. By the way, with this newsletter, all members will be receiving their official membership card. This carries your membership number and has been issued to help us keep track.
Whilst on the subject of new members, let's all work hard at swelling our numbers in 1978. Although we have done well in our first months, the ultimate success of the club depends on our growing larger and stronger as the years pass. You can help by bringing along just one friend as a new member. If each of us does that, our membership will double!
Although there are too many new members to mention by name here, I thought that you would like to know that we already have two American members: Pat Sullivan, President of the American Club Crosby, and Frank McAllister, who belongs to the just-mentioned organization. South Australia is also represented by well-known collector Graham Reade who was fortunate enough to actually meet Bing twice.

Bing on TV

Christmass 1977 will probably be remembered as the last great "Crosby Christmas". We had two TV specials (with the 1977 show emerging as one of Bing's best specials in recent years - I especially liked the way that Bing kept breaking up over Stanley Baxter's brilliant impersonation of Bob Hope - he really captured the timing and dellavery of the young Hope perfectly. I believe that it took Bing three takes to get that sketch right!)

Channel 9 also obliged us on Christmas Eve/Day with several Bing movies.
BUT why oh why must they put them on the midnight-to-dawn session, AND why must we see the same old films over and over again??? How about the Big Broadcast of 1932? Or College Humour? Or any of the dozens of other Crosby movies, early or late that never turn up on television. I actually wrote this to GTV a couple of months back but received no reply. Perhaps if we all wrote, we might achieve something. The man to address your letters to is the Programme Manager.

However, you needent mention that you are a member of the society. If these letters appear to be coming from a variety of unconnected people, they may carry more weight.

"Memories of Bing" on 3CR

As some of you know, I have been presenting a programme entitled "The Crosby Collector" for the past couple of years, first over 3ZZ and latterly (thanks to Neville Wragg) on 3CR. Early in the new year, I would like to present a special edition entitled "Memories of Bing" and featuring your recorded voices telling of your favourite memory of Crosby. It can be connected with a movie, a radio show, a record or whatever. What I intend to do is string these "memories" together, several at a time, and using the last in each group to lead into an appropriate track. You can supply your recorded memory (assuming that you would like to appear in the show) in any form that you like - cassette, reel to reel tape, any speed, etc. If you don't have access to a tape recorder, drop me a line and I'll arrange something from this end. PLEASE however, keep your memory item to about 45 seconds if possible, otherwise we'll find that the entire programme is taken up by just a handful of people. Also, if you could follow the following format, more or lass, it would be appreciated. SAMPLE "MEMORY": "This is Bill Jones of Footscray. I remember back in the mid-1930's when my girlfriend and I were first going out together, we used to take a portable gramophone and a pile of Bing 78's and go rowing down at Studley Park. I'll never forget having a picnic by the Yarra and listening to Bing sing "Down by the River" in his wonderful full-voiced style. That would certainly be my favourite memory of Bing Crosby." Obviously that is a fictional example, but I'm sure that you get the idea. Keep it short and simple, start off with your name and suburb (if possible) and try and round off your story at the end. If we all do that, I'm sure it will result in a programme that will end up being a lot of people's favourite "Memory of Bing".

Speaking of 3CR, the next edition of the Crosby Collector goes to air on Sunday January 8th at 9.00 pm. It features a special recording of Bing's Musical Autobiography (which was one of the many reissues in the past 3 months) and features the early section (1926 - 1940) which many people have complained about because the musical items there were not the originals but recreated with Bing and Buddy Cole and his Trio. The simple reason why the originals were not used is that in the early days, Bing recorded for a number of labels and these were simply not available to Decca to use when they recorded the Autobiography set in 1955. What I have done therefore, is to record Bing's spoken narration from the set and splice in tapes of the originals in the appropriate positions. The result is quite exciting and I'm sure you'll enjoy hearing this "doctored" version of the Musical Autobiography. Neville will be playing about an hour of the tape on the 8th, but you'll be pleased to know that the entire 1926 - 1940 period will be available on cassette in the club library in a few weeks time.

Bing's Birth Date Established

Over the years, the date of Bing's birth has been a contentious point with Bing opting for May 2nd 1904 and a number of "experts" as May 2nd, 1901. Well, everyone was wrong. I recently received from the United States, a press clipping which proves that Bing was actually born on May 3rd, 1903! This date is verified by a reproduction of Bing's baptimsal certificate which clearly states the date. As the newspaper article states, why no-one thought to examine official Roman Catholic Church records at St Patricks Parish is a mystery. Especially puzzling is the fact that Bing's 1957 marriage to Katherine is noted to one side of the certificate! I guess that the person who wrote that on wasn't concerned with the Crosby birth-date controversy!!!

Articles on Bing

In the months following Bing's death, there have been written numerous magazine art articles in newspapersaand magazines. I had thought to collect some of these and present them is a special memorial edition. However, lack of time and the cost of having these newspaper clippings converted to electronic stencils (several dollars per page!) has held me back. However, I would be interested in hearing your opinion on this. Would you be prepared to pay a special cost for a "memorial" newsletter of this type? Also, would you be able to contribute any interesting clippings

rom local or overseas publications which you think may be of interest. Obviously, the common "this is Bing's life story he was born in Tacoma studied law but decided to go into show biz instead and joined paul Whiteman's orchestra etc" type articles aren't really needed. But anything that gives us new or different information on Bing's career, last hours, public reactions to the news, etc, could make interesting reading. Any clippings sent would be treated with maximum care and returned to the sender if desired. However, as all would have to be lightly glued down in place on a page, they may not be returned in the same condition in which they were sent.

But as I mentioned earlier, this is only a possibility at the moment. And while you're digesting all the above, bear this in mind. Both Crosby clubs in the UK and the US will almost certainly be publishing special magazines of this kind; so do we also want to prepare one? I would appreciate your thoughts.

Speaking of articles on Bing, the January issue of Parade has a six page feature on the Crosby story. Unfortunately, it is of the variety outlined above, but if you would like to buy the magazine, I'm sure that you will enjoy it. More interestingly, did you see the article in the Herald the other night where it was stated that in the United States, the record presses have been turning out 4 MILLION Crosby LP's A DAY in recent weeks! Incredible. I presume that the Herald figures are correct and if they are, that would mean that in just one month, another 100,000,000 Crosby LP's would become available. I don't know what this would do to the figures of Bing's records sold. The total recently was 400,000,000 but obviously this will be outdated fast. And of course, I suppose you know that the above figure for sales is of Bing's Decca records only. I imagine that we'll never know what hst figures for the years 1926 - mid-1934 are. Many many millions, especially when you consider that many of the songs Bing recorded in the 1931 - 34 period have never been out of the catalogues!!!

Overseas Crosby Societies

Above, we mentioned the UK and US Crosby Societies. You may be interesting in knowing a little more about these organizations, both incidentally which are welcome to join. The American Club Crosby was formed roughly 25 years ago and issues a magazine about 4 times a year called "Bingang". The editior of the magazine, and also the President of the Club, is one Pat SUllivan. Current membership fees are US $6.50 p.a. Pat puts together a great magazine, full of interesting news about record issues and re-issues that we never see here, plus newspaper clippings, articles etc. Write to Pat of yuu would like any further information, but submit any member ship fees to the Club Treasurer, Priscilla Koernig. The addresses of both girls are: Patricia E. Sullican, 1301 Sheridan, Apt 96, Chico, California USA 95926; and Priscilla Koernig, 1423 Oak Street, San Mateo, California, USA 94402.

The UK Society, The International Crosby Circle, has also been in existance many many years. They also produce a regular newsletter and cover many things from the English viewpoint, bearing in mind that Bing's last years as a performer were very much centred around Great Britain. Reg Bristo is the gentleman who produces their magazine "Bing" and is the one to write to for further information. Annual sub. is UK 2 pounds, and Reg's address is: 7 Greenmeadow Close, Cwmbran (right spelling), Gwent NP4 3NR, United Kingdom.

Another publication from the UK which you may be interested in is entitled "Bing Pictorial - incorporating 'Tapes Exclusive'" which is produced by three men: Frank Murphy (an ex-editor of"Bing"), Sam Warman and Johnny Jones. As well as featuring articles, it also offers for sale: 1. Black and white or colour photo's of Bing at various stages of his career, and 2. Cassette tapes of rare or unusual material. Both the pictures and the tapes are offered at very moderate prices. Annual sub. is UK two pounds 50p, payable to Frank Murphy, 32 Ferndale Ave, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear NE 28 7NE England.

Well, there you are. A great free plug for the "opposition". Seriously though, it would probably pay you to follow up one or more of the above. All will really help extend your enjoyment of things Crosby.

L.P. issues/re-issues

So many Crosby LP's have been issued or re-issued in recent weeks, you may not have caught up with all of them. Following therefore is a list of most of the Bing records (not including pirate discs which come and go throughout the year) currently available in Australia.

Bing Crosby - a legendary performer RCA CPL 12086
It's easy to remember MCA TVS 1005
Shillelaghs and Shamrocks MCA MAP/S 1707
A nostalgic hour of Bing Crosby MCA MAP/S 6328
A tribute to Bing Crosby (2 x 2lp sets - radio material) EMI EMB 10389 & 10390
A musical autobiography of Bing Crosby MCA Coral (5 lps) COPS 62395 *
London Palladium Concert (2 lps) United Artists UA L45717/8
Thats what life is all about United Artists US L35568
A Southern Memoir London SAHA 8489
Feels good, feels right United Artists SKLA 5261 (also available on World Record Club as "When I leave the world behind" R/C 04707)
Mr Crosby and Mr Mercer MCA COPS 7721
Pocketful of dreams MCA COPS 3332
That Christmas Feeling COPS 3630
The Bing Crosby Story Vol 1 CBS S2BP 220159
Old Masters (3 LP's) MCA MAPS 5116
Two Favourite Stories MCA COPS 3759
I wish you a merry Xmas (reissue of early 1960's Xmas LP) ST 6899 EMI
A time to be jolly 20th Century L 36487 (reissue of an LP from 1970)
This is Bing Crosby (2 lp's culled from tracks recorded in 1956 and 57) RCA CPL2 7107
Bing sings for children MCA COPS 3114
Songs I wish I'd sung the first time round MCA COPS 4222
Songs everybody knows COPS 4225 MCA
My Golden Favourites COPS 4235 MCA
Holiday in Europe MCA MAPS 1707
Merry Christmas MCA COPS 1011
The best of Bing MCA DXSB 7184
Bing Crosby's greatest hits (a new reissue of mostly re-issued previously old material) MCA MC 3031
Crosby Classics HC 1048 Harmony
High Society World Record Club R/C RC 00557 Also, Capitol SW 750.
Seasons (Bing's last LP) Polydor C 3170478
A couple of song and dance men United Artists
At my time of life United Artists UA L 35889
The Great Country Hits Capitol VMP 10324
A Christmas sing with Bing around the world (reissue of a 1955 LP - taken from a radio show.)

* Musical autobiography set is also available from the world record club on R04708/12

Where do ya get it?!

All club members automatically get a 10% discount on all new LP's from Jim McManus's Bentleigh Sewing and Record Centre, 348 Centre Road, Bentleigh. Jim can help you with virtually all of the above, and if it's inconvenient for you to get down to Bentleigh, I believe that the shop has a mail order service as well.

Original 78's

If you're after Bing on the original pre-vinyl 78's, Nevin Walker's Vintage Record Shop, 302 High Street, Armadale has quite a good supply. Nevin specializes in 78's and is open three times a week: Tuesday and Thursday 1 - 6.00 pm and Saturday mornings from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm. He's on holiday at the moment but should reopen in mid-January. Prices are very low too. You should be able to pick up Bing on Decca for under a dollar.

Maybe I'll see you at Nevin's one Saturday morning soon.

Report on past functions

In the latter part of 1977, we held two very successful functions. The first, a film afternoon; the second, a barbecue.

The Film afternoon On Sunday, November 17th, around 90 members turned up to the screening of the rarely seen "Road to Rio", a films of the 1942 Crosby Pro-Am Tournament, a documentary on Bing's Hollywood career, and a 5 minute clip from Bing's first feature movire appearance in the 1930 "King of Jazz" . Despite slightly wonky sound, the last item was especially well received. All were most enthusiastic about our new venue, the Collingwood Education Centre, although many had trouble in finding out where to go. My most sincere apologies for this. The centre is so big it's very easy to get lost. So in the next newsletter which will contain details of our next film afternoon, I will include a MAP showing where to park and where to enter.

Possibly the only fault with the aftrenoon was that we tried to cram too much into too little time with the result that the break in the middle had to be shortened to half an hour and the afternoon ran a little late for people who had to get away. Nonetheless, despite all these shortcomings, most people agreed that the event was a great success.

The Thelma and Frank Wood Barbecue was held on Sunday December 4th. Thelma and Frank were kind enough to lend us their home for the afternoon and over fifty members turned up for chops and salad and sausages. Highlights of the afternoon included Jim McManus's auctioning off of a number of rare Bing 78's, and later in the day, running a lucky wheel in which LP's from his shop were offered as prizes. Thank you very much Frank and Thelma and Jim and all those who helped to make it a great afternoon.

Several members who attended were also very interested in a publication which a friend had just brought back from the United States for Les Saynor. Entitled "The Bing Crosby Album" it was a comprehensive review of Bing's career and featured many colour pictures, interesting facts etc. Because so many were interested in purchasing a copy, we wrote to the publishers in America to ask whether they could supply us with 200 copies. You'll be pleased to know that I received a letter back this week that the publisher has made arrangements for Gordon and Gotch to supply the magazines to us. Hopefully, they'll be available sometime early 1978. More details when available.

AND FINALLY, FUTURE FUNCTIONS.

Monday, February 6th: Musical Evening
Borrowing from our friends of the Sinatra Society, we are instituting the first of a series of musical evenings. Three guest speakers, Les Saynor, Bill Bennett and Ken Orren will each be speaking on one facet of Bing's career, demonstrating their talks with unusual and interesting musical examples. A pleasant relaxing evening to give all members a chance to get to know each other. Supper will be served. Venue: Although the Collingwood Centre is ideal for movies, it was felt that something a little more intimate would be desirable. Therefore, for this one meeting, we have booked a room at the North Balwyn RSL which is located in Centreway, off Doncaster Road and just before Trentwood Avenue. Look for the Bowling Green in front of the RSL. We have booked a room very closd to the entrance.

Sunday, March 12th, 11.00 am - 6.00 pm: Barbecue
Following on the success of our last barbecue at the start of Summer, we have decided to hold a second and similiar event at the start of Autumn. The venue on this occasion will be the home of president, Bob Machliss; 10 Devon St, Caulfield. Devon Street is off Glen Eira Road, just across Hawthorn Road in the direction of the racecourse. (If you get lost, ring 523 9263). Admission is $2.00 per head for adults, children under 16 free. Please B.Y.O.G. As last time, you will have the opportunity to win records and other prizes. (Incidentally, the Bing Crosby mirror raffled at our last barbecue was won by Betty Orren.) Also as before, all meat and salads will be supplied. See you there.

Sunday April 9th, 1.30 p.m. - 6.00 pm: Film Afternoon
More details about this one in our next newsletter. However, we are hopeful of obtaining a print of Bing's 1933 movie "Pennies from Heaven". Another really rare item! Keep the date free. Until February 6th, best wishes.